

The **BARRED OWL**

Newsletter of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society

Volume XLII, Number 2

2nd Quarter, 2015



Peveto Woods Sanctuary adds new Weather Shelter and Signage

Peveto Woods Sanctuary now has a new 12' by 24' weather shelter with interpretive panels thanks to the work of volunteers and the Creole Nature Trail. Last February, we received a note from Anne Klenke with the Creole Nature Trail asking if we would be interested in new signs and a kiosk. She had money available from a grant as long as we included interpretive panels for visitors to the sanctuary. She and I began a search and finally settled on building one with local carpenters of our own design. The weather and insects became tolerable in October, and the construction began. The design and planning was completed in advance and the structure was finished within a week.

There are two panels with graphics on both sides discussing cheniers, the sanctuary, and different aspects of nature along the Cameron coast. The photographs and text from many contributors created the graphics of the panels which were installed in December.

Gene Barnett and Bill Gover contributed two nice benches across from the panels. There was enough money to also include two new signs on the road and a new kiosk for the log book. These additions were made possible thanks to many contributors including: Gene Barnett, Rob Dobbs, Tom Finnie, Bill Fontenot, Gay Gomez, Bill Gover, Billy Jones, Anne Klenke, Brad Moon, Mac Myers, Kenneth Romero, Jeff Trahan, Bill Vermillion, and Robert Vincent.



Peveto Woods Sanctuary Shelter

Dave Patton
Peveto Woods
Sanctuary Manager

American Bird Association's 2015 Bird of the Year

GREEN HERON

The hunch-backed Green Heron is a favorite among birders and wildlife enthusiasts, and now holds the respected title of American Birding Association's 2015 Bird of the Year! This charismatic wading bird is more of a fisherman than a classic hip-wading heron or egret. They are perhaps most famous for using lures, like worms, insects, and even feathers, to attract minnows to the water's surface where unwitting fish stand little chance against the quick thrusting dagger-like bill that the Green Heron wields as a professional and stylish fishing rod.



It's hard to think of anything that isn't amazing about Green Herons. They migrate across the Gulf of Mexico to land and rest in trees, just like their distant songbird cousins, adding a splash of rufous and green to the mix of yellows, reds, and blacks flashed about by classy warblers and tanagers. Also like many songbirds, they often nest as solitary pairs, or sometimes in small collections of pairs, but typically away from the loud squabbling rookeries so favored by other wading birds.

Locally known as the "Kop-kop" (a sound they make when flushed), Green Herons are actually widely

distributed across the western hemisphere. They are found throughout the eastern U.S. all the way into southern Canada, and also along the edge of the west coast, all down through Mexico and into northern South America. In the tropics, they broadly overlap with another congener, the Striated Heron, and the two were once until recently (1993 to be specific) considered the same species: the Green-backed Heron. It turns out that although they hybridize, the two forms seem to prefer mating with their own.

Although endearing to lovers of wildlife, surprisingly little is known to ornithologists about Green Herons. Because "Skoew" (another colloquial nickname) don't associate with larger waterbird colonies, it is pretty hard to get accurate continental and global population estimates since these birds are sparsely and secretively distributed across the landscape. According to Breeding Bird Survey data, it appears that the U.S. population has declined by about 50% in the last 45 years, which may be a bit surprising given that other wading birds have increased in populations dramatically since the halt of DDT. Certainly the loss and conversion of wetlands for a variety of human needs has contributed to this, but could the loss of wintering habitat, like mangroves and other tropical wetlands, also be exacerbating this? The honest answer is that we don't know what is going on as they are so poorly studied.

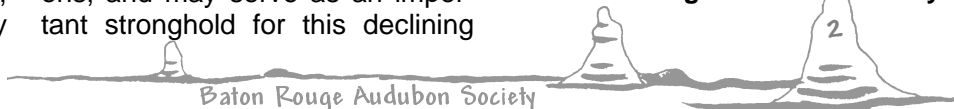
South Louisiana's extensive marshes and bottomland forests creates a Mecca for Green Herons, and may serve as an important stronghold for this declining



species. For this reason, Louisiana State University Shreveport graduate student, Molly Folkerts who is advised by Dr. Jim Ingold, and Audubon Louisiana scientists have been studying Green Heron nesting success in the marshes of south Louisiana. It turns out that nesting success appears lower than in other kinds of habitats elsewhere in the country, perhaps due to increased predation from bobcats, Great Horned Owls, and others. This lower nesting success may also be more extreme along man-made navigation canals, where the linear and raised banks may facilitate easy navigation by those very predators, compared to natural winding bayous that twist and turn through the marsh. A third year of study is in the works, which will be led by Audubon Louisiana's new avian biologist, Katie Percy, to continue to test this idea of reduced nesting success along man-made canals.

If you love the Green Heron, join us in celebrating this 2015 Bird of the Year. Maybe next time you watch a Green Heron, it will teach you some of its favorite fishing lure secrets!

Erik Johnson
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Baton Rouge Audubon Society



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Changes of address and other official
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Baton Rouge Audubon Society Speaker Series Proves Thought Provoking

The 2014-2015 Baton Rouge Audubon Society Speaker Series has proven to be very interesting. We started the year with a talk by local birder Alex Haun, who described the potentially pathogenic bacteria that birds might carry. In October, we had a viewing of *Plastic Paradise*, a documentary illustrating the dangers of plastics in the Pacific Ocean and how it endangers Laysan Albatross on Midway Atoll. This screening was accompanied by a visit from a representative from PaddleBR, who shared his experiences kayaking in Baton Rouge's waterways of simultaneously enjoying the experience and ridding the waterways of anthropogenic debris. In November, we learned about fossils and what they can tell us about bird behavior in the U.S. and Central and South America. In January, Kacy King told us about the birds and other fauna at Lake Martin. In February, we were treated to a presentation of John James Audubon's Louisiana birds by John Hartgerink, who recreated the original Audubon alignments of birds and flora by capturing modern versions of these alignments alongside the originals.

In March we will hear about the use of radar to monitor bird migration, a talk to be given by Lori Randall, a biologist at the National Wetlands Research Center in Lafayette, LA. In April we will wrap up the year with a presentation by Jared Wolfe on birding and the Equatorial Guinea Bird Initiative.

Thanks so much to everyone who has supported us, especially the BREC Bluebonnet Swamp Nature Center staff who accommodate our monthly speakers after hours and in their brand new meeting space. We take this opportunity to remind you to renew your membership and bring a friend, and as always, donations are very much appreciated.

What Our Friends Are Doing

LOS SPRING MEETING

April 24-25
Cameron, LA

Friday's registration will start at 6 and the evening's speaker will be Sara Zimorski who will bring us up to date on Louisiana's Whooping Cranes. Saturday's speaker will be Dr. Sid Gautreaux, Jr. who will present on "The Use of Radar to Study Biological Targets in the Atmosphere". Registration deadline is April 18th. Please check the LOS website for more information www.losbird.org or contact Joelle Finley at 504-715-2647.

Louisiana Bird Observatory Extends Its Reach!

Based on the enthusiastic support of its volunteers, citizen scientists, and positive public feedback, the Louisiana Bird Observatory (LABO), a program of the Baton Rouge Audubon Society, has expanded from its original home at Bluebonnet Swamp in Baton Rouge to a network of three year-round monitoring sites between New Orleans and Lafayette, plus additional seasonally monitored sites. Continued expansion is focused on bridging a gap in state-wide coverage by establishing a new year-round bird banding station in southwest Louisiana. A proposed site has been identified in Calcasieu Parish at Sam Houston Jones State Park, which is situated in one of the most productive birding regions in Louisiana. Irvin Louque and Phillip Vasseur, with the support and interest by McNeese State University researchers and LABO leaders, have taken on the initiative of establishing the new station.

To reach its goal and expand its network of bird monitoring and environmental education sites, LABO seeks partnerships with civic leaders and businesses that appreciate environmental stewardship in their communities and would like to help finance this valuable program. Start-up costs for a new bird banding station are \$3,000 which allow for the purchase of mist-nets and poles, banding pliers and other banding tools, electronic scales, bird bags, etc.



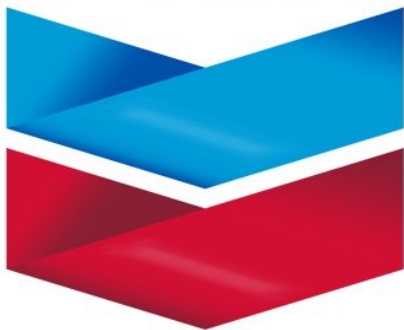
LABO's first Prothonotary Warbler capture of 2015! We worked with Audubon Louisiana to deploy 21 geolocators last year and we are eager to see these birds come back so that we can learn their migratory routes.

Any financial contribution to this Baton Rouge Audubon program initiative would be greatly appreciated. In addition to the satisfaction of investing in conservation and public education, private donors contributing \$100 or more and corporate donors contributing \$500 or more towards the new site will be acknowledged on signage at the banding station and in published scholarly articles. Contributions can be mailed to: Baton Rouge Audubon Society, P.O. Box 67016, Baton Rouge, LA 70896 and should indicate "LABO new station". Any and all contributions are greatly appreciated!

**Contributed by Phillip Vasseur
and Erik Johnson**

Baton Rouge Audubon thanks

Chevron



**for their sponsorship of
our education programs!**

Do we have your email address?

Keep up to date with all of Baton Rouge Audubon Society's events and programs by joining our email list! We won't inundate you with spam, we promise! Simply send a request to president@braudubon.org and ask to be added to the e-list!

AND If you would prefer to receive the BRAS "*Barred Owl*" newsletter in electronic form **ONLY** (rather than the printed version thereby lessening your carbon footprint) please email our Membership chair and let her know! Drop her a line at membership@braudubon.org

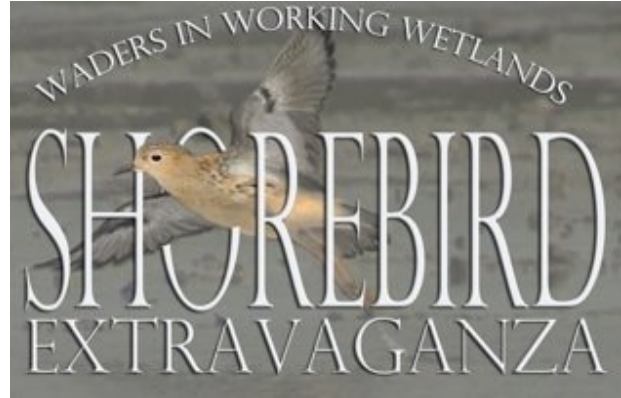
**Also please follow us on Facebook at
www.facebook.com/BRAudubon**



Announcing a new Spring Birding Event:

Waders in Working Wetlands: Shorebird Extravaganza 2015

Based in Jennings, *Waders in Working Wetlands: Shorebird Extravaganza* will focus on the abundance and diversity of birds in southwestern Louisiana's working wetlands (rice and crawfish). As the name suggests, this event celebrates shorebirds. It's a great time of the year to visit this area to see shorebirds – there will be lots of them and most are in fancy breeding plumage. There will be shorebird trips to see as many species as possible - up close and personal, a few talks one afternoon to address shorebirds in the working wetland landscape, and a workshop to hone your shorebird identification skills. There will also be guided field trips to explore other habitats, such as longleaf pine forest, swamp and bottomland hardwoods, freshwater and saltwater marsh, and, of course, beaches along the Gulf Coast. At the Extravaganza, you should have the chance to



encounter a large cross section of the specialty breeding and migrant birds of the southeastern US. Socials include a Meet and Greet at Mike's Seafood, an evening of entertainment at the quaint Strand Theatre featuring The R. Bruce Reunion Tour, and a crawfish boil in traditional Louisiana style at Tallgrass Farms in nearby Roanoke. Like AVESTTEAM's Yellow Rails and Rice Festival, the atmosphere will be fun, casual, and laid back. Spring is a wonderful time to be in the field in Louisiana – join us!

BRAS would like to extend a special thank you to our high-level contributors for their generous support in the first quarter of 2015.

Painted Bunting Membership

Lionel Head
John Turner

Louisiana Waterthrush Membership

Jay Guillory

Rose-breasted Grosbeak Membership

Ruth L. Bowman
John & Cindy Hartgerink
Rosemary Seidler

Thank You!

**For more information or
to register online visit:**

[http://www.snowyegretenterprises.com/
Snowy_Egret_Enterprises/
Shorebird_Extravaganza.html](http://www.snowyegretenterprises.com/Snowy_Egret_Enterprises/Shorebird_Extravaganza.html)

*Please consider attending this year
to kick off this new event, and
please help spread the word!*

For more information or to be added to our
festival email list, email
Donna L. Dittmann at
yellowrailsandrice@gmail.com



Baton Rouge Chapter of the National Audubon Society

Baton Rouge Audubon Society

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Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70896

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Keep Your Membership Current!

If your membership expires, you will no longer receive *The Barred Owl*. We'll eventually take your name off the list. It is expensive to produce and membership dues help to cover that cost. Please see the expiration code on the first line of the label above your name. The month and year in which your membership expires are indicated after your membership organization (e.g., BRAS DEC 09 for BRAS-only members and NAS DEC 10 for NAS members).

Keeping your membership current is important!

BRAS and National Audubon Membership

You may join NAS by going to their website (audubon.org) and you automatically become a member of both NAS and BRAS. You will receive the quarterly award-winning *Audubon* magazine as well as the quarterly BRAS newsletter, *The Barred Owl*.

BRAS Only Membership

If you want all of your dues to support local conservation and education, join BRAS only. You will NOT receive the *Audubon* magazine. You WILL receive *The Barred Owl* and a free sanctuary patch. You may join on-line at any level by visiting our website www.braudubon.org, or send this form with your check to: BRAS, P.O. Box 67016, BR LA 70896.

Patches!

Extra sanctuary patches or patches for NAS members are \$10 each and can be ordered by using the form to the right. If you are joining BRAS and want a **free** patch, you must put "1" in the blank.

Baton Rouge Audubon Society (BRAS)

Please enroll me as a member of BRAS! Enclosed is my check for:

- \$25 Individual Membership
- \$30 Family Membership
- \$50 Wood Thrush Membership
- \$100 Rose-breasted Grosbeak Membership
- \$250 Louisiana Waterthrush Membership
- \$500 Painted Bunting Membership
- \$1000 Cerulean Warbler Membership
- \$ _____ Additional Contribution
- \$ _____ Total remitted with form

#____ of patches (indicate 1 which is **free** with BRAS membership. Additional patches are \$10 each; NAS member patches @ \$10 each; no patch will be sent if there is no indication.)

- Electronic version of newsletter **only** (do not mail)
- Add me to the BRAS email list (to be informed of field trips, etc.)

Name: _____ Ph: _____

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